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AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2004

HEARINGS

BEFORE A

SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTH CONGRESS
FIRST SESSION

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES

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AGRICULTURE, RURAL DEVELOPMENT, FOOD AND DRUG ADMINISTRATION, AND RELATED AGENCIES APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2004

Thursday, March 13, 2003.

RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

WITNESSES

JOSEPH J. JEN, UNDER SECRETARY, RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS
EDWARD B. KNIPLING, ACTING ADMINISTRATOR, AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH SERVICE
COLIEN HEFFERAN, ADMINISTRATOR, COOPERATIVE STATE RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND EXTENSION SERVICE
SUSAN E. OFFUTT, ADMINISTRATOR, ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE
R. RONALD BOSECKER, ADMINISTRATOR, NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
STEPHEN B. DEWHURST, BUDGET OFFICER
RODNEY BROWN, DEPUTY UNDER SECRETARY, RESEARCH, EDUCATION, AND ECONOMICS

Opening Remarks

Mr. Bonilla. The subcommittee will come to order. We are delighted this afternoon to have with us Dr. Joseph Jen, the under secretary for research, education, and economics. Dr. Jen, we are happy to have you here and we welcome your testimony today, as well as those of your associates who appearing with you today.

Ms. Kaptur is en route and will be here shortly. And we have members dealing with simultaneous hearings as we speak, all day and all afternoon, and we may get interrupted by a vote or two, but we will proceed with the hearing and conclude as promptly as we can, trying to respect everyone's schedule.

I will yield to Ms. Kaptur for opening remarks when she arrives. But before I ask you to proceed, Dr. Jen, I would like to once again state a very serious concern that not only I have, but other members of this subcommittee, and this is something we talked about at your first appearance last year, about congressionally initiated research which we have appropriated year after year in the past. We see that Director Daniels has not changed his mind again. And I can assure you, and we will tell him directly when we meet with him individually or as a group, that we have not changed our mind either about the significance of what we bring to the table as members of the House of Representatives.

So I will spare you the tutorial that I delivered last year. I would like to deliver it to Director Daniels directly and, again, have had conversations with him and will do so again. But it is hard to believe sometimes that somehow the message is not sinking through about what we have accomplished traditionally, we feel, in a very responsible way by working in a bipartisan way with this subcommittee.

Let me try to explain our position this way. It has been said that the difference between basic and applied research is that basic research is research for its own sake. It takes a lot of faith for a farmer to believe that blue sky research, for example, is going to help him get rid of the bugs that are eating his crops or to cure the disease that is afflicting his animals in a particular season. My own view is that when you have a fire in front of you, you need to get some water on it and put it out. And that is not real helpful, to discuss the concept of fire, on some occasions, but you have the luxury to do that sometime in the future. But right now you need to put fires out, when our folks out there in the heartland are facing acute problems.

And, you know, we, again, emphasize that we were sent here by our constituents to work on problems that they bring to our attention on a daily basis, sometimes of different magnitudes of importance. But that is why we are here, and I do not think our subcommittee is going to stop doing what we were sent here to do.

In your prepared statement, you say that the budget for ARS proposes a cut of $149 million in current programs, mostly from congressionally designated funding. The budget for CSREES proposes a cut of $143 million from congressionally designated funding. This is not just trimming around the edges; this is a whole-scale elimination of work that we have deemed to be important. And I want to make that clear. It is apparent that our message apparently is not getting through. Perhaps this is the year to stop talking about the marginal dollar of research funding. Maybe we need to take a different approach and start talking about the very first dollar of research funding. Our subcommittee might want to build a USDA research budget from the ground up and stop trying to adjust an inadequate budget to serve our purposes.

If we decide to do that, Dr. Jen, I think you know that the first dollar would be spent in Texas, the second dollar in Ohio, and right down the list here. And it would be a long time before we get around to the headquarters activities at Beltsville, Maryland, or the District of Columbia.

So I hope that the point is coming across. And I know that perhaps you understand what we are saying and you may not be able to comment openly on what you truly understand about this subcommittee, but I want to make it perfectly clear where we are coming from. And that has not changed andit will not change if there is a different person sitting in this chair in the future and from now until the end of time. So that is something I hope that OMB understands very clearly.

At this time, I will let you proceed with your remarks.

Dr. Jen. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for that consideration, for not asking me to comment on it.

Introduction of Witnesses

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, it is my pleasure to appear in front of you to discuss the fiscal year 2004 budget for the research, education and economics mission-area agencies of the USDA. I am accompanied by Dr. Rodney Brown, deputy under secretary of REE, and the administrators of the four agencies--Dr. Ed Knipling, acting administrator of the Agricultural Research Service; Dr. Colien Hefferan, administrator of the Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; Dr. Susan Offutt, administrator of the Economic Research Service; and Mr. Ronald Bosecker, administrator of the National Agricultural Statistics Service. Also present is Mr. Steve Dewhurst, director of the Office of Budget and Program Analysis of the department. Each administrator has some written testimony for the record.

Opening Statement

Placed in the context of current tight Government spendings, the REE budget that we are here to discuss today reflects a strong commitment to addressing the challenges facing our Nation's food and agricultural system. We appreciated your support in fiscal year 2003 appropriations. The President's fiscal year 2004 budget proposes $2.266 billion for the four REE agencies, about the same as the fiscal year 2003 presidential budget proposal of $2.312 billion. The proposed budget requests increases for certain higher priority programs by reprogramming some of the lower priority programs and eliminating some completed tasks.

Science and technology are the foundation of the American food and agriculture system. These four agencies have been central to making the discoveries that have given us the most plentiful, affordable, and safe food supply any nation has ever known. Research investments and scientific advances have caused per acre yields of corn for silage and milk production per dairy cow to more than double in the last half of the 20th century, while household income devoted to food has dropped from 20.5 to 10.2 percent. This is a phenomenal success story, a story based quite significantly on the REE agencies' research, education, economic, and statistical analysis over the years.

The environment surrounding the food and agricultural system is in constant flux. Today, our farmers and ranchers and also our value-added food industry face stiff competition in worldwide markets. Many countries now spend a higher percentage of their nation's research dollar on the food and agricultural system than we do. Constant attention to and investment in food and agricultural research is necessary to maintain our leadership in the world.

A recent National Academies report on REE, entitled ``Frontiers in Agricultural Research: Food, Health, Environment and Communities,'' stated, and I quote, ``Recent scientific breakthroughs will make it easier for agriculture to achieve its potential for delivering a wide array of benefits to society. For this potential to be realized, the agricultural research system must take advantage of new opportunities and relationships. Changing public values and needs will create new market opportunities and will alter agriculture's relationship to the food and fiber system, the environment and the fabric of American society. Research will support agriculture as a positive economic, social, and environmental force and will help the sector to fulfill ever-evolving demands.''

The remarkable success enjoyed by the food and agriculture system in this country depends heavily on our having a reservoir of basic scientific knowledge. Technology and mission-oriented applied research as well as problem solving projects must draw from this reservoir of scientific knowledge. I appreciate very much your support of the USDA's flagship competitive grant program, namely, the National Research Initiative, with a significant increase of $46 million in the fiscal year 2003 appropriations, raising the total funding level to $166 million. However, the NRI funding level is still only one-third of the authorized level of $500 million. As a competitive program, the NRI is open to the entire research community and provides the most effective mechanism to attract the best minds in the Nation to work on food and agricultural research, and to add to our science knowledge reservoir. For the fiscal year 2004 budget, we propose to increase the NRI to $200 million.

GENOMICS

One of the most recent scientific breakthrough areas and one that represents immense opportunities for the food and agricultural sector is genomics research. Genomics is where the 21st century's biological science is going. Genomics and biotechnology provide powerful tools to address many of the thorny problems that have challenged production agriculture for years. Called the ``high-speed biology,'' genomics permits rapid understanding and careful use of desired traits in microbes, plants, and animals. Where previously scientists worked at the cellular level, they can now work at the molecular level. Genomics also adds to the basic science knowledge reservoir. As has been demonstrated in the study of the human genome, studying the metabolic pathways dictated by genetic sequences can lead to new knowledge that has unanticipated beneficial applications.

Through the study of the genetic makeup of organisms, genomics links the properties of genes to how plants and animals function. For example, genomics can eliminate the production of fungal toxins such as aflatoxin; prevent diseases in animals exposed to pathogens, such as foot and mouth disease; uniformly and reliably produce desirable nutritional characteristics in commodities such as the newly developed golden rice, which contains much higher levels of vitamin A and iron. It can develop rapid, accurate diagnostic tools for monitoring and detecting animal and plant pathogens, such as Listeria; make production friendlier to the environment, tapping into the natural defensive resources of agricultural plants and animals; reduce or eliminate the use of many agricultural chemicals and antibiotics and make the food products that consumers want.

Molecular-level understanding of life processes is one of six public research and development priorities set out in the fiscal year 2004 budget memorandum from directors of the White

House Offices of Science and Technology Policy and Management and Budget. In particular, the directors note that new applications in health care, agriculture, energy, and environmental management justify genomics as a priority. Agriculture lags behind the medical, the energy-related, and non-agricultural basic sciences in making investment in this area. To be a world leader in agricultural genomics, USDA requires a sustained investment to engage in genomics research and to cooperate with other Federal agencies.

Both ARS and CSREES have significantly increased their genomics programs in recent years. However, fulfilling the promises of genomics will require additional investment. The President's fiscal year 2004 budget provides increases of $13 million in ARS's agricultural genomics budget and $10 million in CSREES's NRI to strengthen both agencies' genomics programs. An increase of $1.1 million in the ERS budget will provide economic data and analysis that complements collateral biological and bioinformatics research, and serves as the basis for policy decisions arising from rapid genomics-based development in food and agriculture.

COLLABORATION

In capturing the unique benefit of genomics research and development, USDA has collaborated with other science institutes, both in the U.S. and abroad. The goal is to achieve direct applications in food and agriculture that would not likely be addressed without USDA participation and targeted funding. USDA has worked closely with the National Science Foundation on the National Plant Genome Initiative and the Microbe Project. USDA is leading the coordination of Federal research activities related to Domestic Animal Genomics, including working closely with the National Institutes of Health.

Our work with other agencies in various research areas is indicative of the growing collaborations in which REE agencies are participating. The REE agencies are working with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration on remote sensing, with the Food and Drug Administration and the Centers for Disease Control on food safety, with the Environmental Protection Agency on implementation of the Food Quality Protection Act, and with the Department of Defense and Department of Energy on biobased products and bioenergy research. Additionally, the new REE strategic plan asks the four agencies to provide increasing research, analytical, statistical, and educational services to other USDA agencies.

BIOSECURITY

The proposed budget provides additional funding for REE agencies to play a major role in strengthening the Nation's biosecurity. The safety of our food and security of our food supply are critical elements of homeland security. The budget provides ARS $11.5 million for biosecurity research with an additional amount for related research on emerging diseases that may be accidentally or intentionally introduced into the food system. Because of its size, complexity, and integration, U.S. agriculture is uniquely vulnerable to highly infectious disease and pests, particularly diseases not endemic to the United States. Working collaboratively with APHIS, the budget provides CSREES with $16 million to maintain a unified Federal-State network of public agricultural institutions to identify and rapidly respond to high-risk biological pathogen outbreaks in the food and agricultural system. Funding of $1 million will support ERS efforts to improve and maintain a security analysis system initiated with supplemental Homeland Security funds. Finally, the President's fiscal year 2004 budget provides ARS with $22 million to finance additional security assessments and implement security countermeasures at the ARS research laboratories.

Scientific and professional human capital is one of the most critical variables affecting the future of our food and agriculture system. Increases in the budget supporting the research component of REE are complemented with increases in education, a critical function of REE. The President's budget provides an increase of $1.9 million for two higher education programs, Institution Challenge Grants to enhance the institutional capacity, and Graduate Fellowship Grants for the development of expertise. The budget also proposes funds for a program to further incorporate an international component into teaching, research, and extension programs at land-grant institutions.

I will skip the portions of the agencies' budget and come to a summary. In summary, I want to reiterate that, given current budget constraints, the REE agencies' budget represent a balanced portfolio, with investments in cutting-edge research such as genomics and in application of the research findings to such issues as biosecurity and food safety pathogens. The budget also provides new funding in education to ensure that the Nation has a strong cadre of professionals in the food and agricultural system. In addition, it recognizes that statistics and economic analysis are critical for informed decision making for all parties involved in the system. With these continued investments, REE will be ready to meet the challenges to agriculture and take advantage of the opportunities presented by cutting-edge science and technology.

This concludes my statement. Thank you for your attention.

[The prepared statements of Dr. Joseph Jen, Dr. Edward Knipling, Dr. Colien Hefferan, Dr. Susan Offutt, and Mr. Ronald Bosecker follow:]

[GRAPHIC(S)NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you, Dr. Jen. It is clear that you are doing a lot of good work and a lot of good research over there, and that we appreciate your hard work.

OFFICE OF THE UNDER SECRETARY BUDGET REQUEST

I had a question about the office of the under secretary. The budget request is 35 percent higher for 2004 than what you have in 2003--$584,000, the request is now for $792,000. Would you tell us in detail what the reasons are for this increase and the specific components of what you need this money for?

Dr. Jen. Yes, Mr. Chairman. I think the reason we made that request is because we have vastly increased cooperation with the other Federal agencies. And also with my being a science representative at the Federal agency level covering the whole area of food and agriculture, we are being asked to be members of a very large number ofcommittees--OSTP and many others. So the request mainly is to increase one or two staff assistants and some operating funds for travel and things like that.

GRANTS TO SOCIALLY DISADVANTAGED FARMERS AND RANCHERS

Mr. Bonilla. Okay. On the subject of, once again, the CSREES area, if you would give us a table showing the expenditures and technical assistance for Socially Disadvantaged Farmers and Ranchers Program since fiscal year 1997, that would be helpful. And we had a couple of questions related to that, you can answer all at one time. Please describe the award process for grants under this program, and if you could provide also for the record a list of grants awarded in fiscal years 1997 through 2002, the grantees, and a brief description of the purpose of each grant. And how has the operation of this program been improved by its transfer to CSREES?

Dr. Jen. Well, if it is okay with you, Mr. Chairman, I will ask Dr. Colien Hefferan, who directs all these programs, to answer that question.

Mr. Bonilla. Very good.

Dr. Hefferan. I certainly can provide the committee a list of the grants that had been made previously. This year, when we were asked to take on the program, we made a decision to consolidate the appropriation from last year with the appropriation for 2003, in part because it was very late in the year when we took on management of the program and because we wanted to make a transition to longer-term grants. The awards had been one-year awards previously, and we wanted to institute some stability into the program. So by consolidating two years of funding and one award mechanism, this year we are anticipating making awards for three years to the institutions and organizations that receive funding.

We are going to have the peer review panel for that program later in April, and anticipate that in May we will announce the awards. We have received 84 applications from around the country from organizations and universities that serve not only African American farmers but Hispanic, American Indian, and other underserved groups, and anticipate that we will probably make approximately 30 awards from that program later this spring.

[The information follows:]

[GRAPHIC(S)NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. Bonilla. Okay. I have a question now about the homeland security budget request. It includes a request for $16 million for a new program for homeland security under the Integrated Activities account. If you could tell us what this money is for, what are the goals in using a dollar figure of that degree?

Dr. Jen. I believe that this is the network program that I mentioned briefly--again, Dr. Hefferan can give you more detail on that.

Dr. Hefferan. As part of the Defense appropriations supplemental last year to the Department, our agency was asked to work with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service to establish a network of laboratories around the Nation that could essentially serve as a backup system and a coordination system with the APHIS laboratories. And so collectively we established a network involving 17 laboratories covering both veterinary diagnostics and, really, a new venture into plant diagnostics.

So there are--it is set up as a hub-and-spoke system, with 5 hub laboratories in veterinary medicine. And those are all laboratories that are located at a land-grant university but also are the state laboratories for veterinary medicine. These are being upgraded so that they are able to, both by the systems that they have in place and the training of their staff, serve as an adjunct to the APHIS laboratories around the country. They were selected on the basis of their ability to look at pathogens that are currently high-threat pathogens for the country and their proximity to where the agricultural issues are.

In addition, there is another set of laboratories that are establishing a plant diagnostics system. These are all to be linked together by a new secure information system that will link these state and university-based labs to the system that APHIS has with the goal of utilizing new research that the universities and the Agricultural Research Service are producing on diagnostics to substantially increase the efficiency and decrease the amount of time it takes to diagnose these high-risk pathogens.

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you.

Dr. Jen. And I believe Texas A&M and Cornell University are both involved in this system.

Mr. Bonilla. Dr. Jen is learning. [Laughter.]

Dr. Hefferan. And the appropriation that we are requesting for next year is essentially to maintain this system. It requires a lot of education for the staff members, the communication system, and making sure that these non-Federal laboratories are meeting the same standards as the Federal laboratories.

Mr. Bonilla. Very good. Thank you, Dr. Jen. Thank you. Mr. Hinchey.

Mr. Hinchey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized a $100-million-a-year competitive research facilities construction grant program for land-grant colleges and universities across the country. The purpose of that program was to enhance the security of agriculture in the United States against various kinds of threats, both internal and external. I see that there is no funding included in the President's budget for this program. I am wondering if you are relying upon theCongress to put that in or if this is just regarded as something that is of no or low priority.

Dr. Jen. Well, I think homeland security is not a low priority at all. But, you know, it is in a year that there are so many items, that we have to pick and choose in some way. So it is a difficult decision year in terms of that. We did request some funding to try and secure the ARS laboratories. Some of them are at land-grant universities, so it is partially addressed in that. And I do not know whether, Steve, you have anything to add to that.

Mr. Dewhurst. No, it is a question of budget, what we could afford.

Mr. Hinchey. Well, you know, budgets are a question of priorities, what is important and what is not important. It seems to us that, well--I say ``us''--it seems to some people who are observing what the Administration is doing generally with regard to domestic activities concerning domestic security. There has been a lot of concern in a number of areas that you are not dealing with. It seems to me that neglecting to fund the facilities program is a mistake and that we ought to be dealing with this issue. And certainly the Congress thought so, because the program was authorized in the farm bill last year. So in any case, I think this is something that we need to pay attention to as the process goes forward.

Dr. Jen. Yes, sir.

Mr. Hinchey. I wanted to join with our chairman, he mentioned that you are doing a lot of good research in a lot of areas. Your work is very much appreciated. What we need to do, of course, is to make sure that your research actually gets out into the field and is practiced.

On page 10G-7 of the budget, you talk about campylobacteriosis. You say this is caused by Campylobacter. It is the most common cause of bacterial diarrhea illness in the United States. And that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimate that campylobacteriosis affects more than 2 million people a year in the United States. You go on to say that under the Evans-Allen program, research conducted at North Carolina Ag & Tech has revealed that about 66 percent of uncooked whole broiler chickens at supermarkets are contaminated with Campylobacter.

Now, we talked about this this morning at another hearing of the subcommittee. And at that time, we said that research indicated that 43 percent of the chicken that was tested showed Campylobacter. But you are telling us it is even more than that. Two-thirds of the broiler chickens that you tested at supermarkets--these are, you know, ready for people to purchase--contained this disease. But you also say that poultry flocks can escape infection when the litter is changed, good sanitation is practiced, and cooler environmental temperatures prevail.

DISSEMINATION AND USE OF REE RESEARCH RESULTS

So my question, really, is what is the means of conveying the good research that you do to other parts of the department to make certain that the research that you conduct is actually being put into practice?

Dr. Jen. We do have, I think, in place this year very, very tight collaborations with other mission areas. In fact, I think I mentioned briefly that I am implementing in REE a new strategic plan that stresses the fact that we need to have better coordination with the other mission areas, like food safety, what you have just said, to make sure that we know the priority of the most important type of pathogen we are facing and that we put more of a research priority on that. ARS actually has a fairly large program in food safety relating to this Campylobacter you are talking about, and is making tremendously good progress on it. In fact, yesterday when we talked with the food safety mission area, that was mentioned.

So I think we are trying to coordinate the research priorities based on more of the local needs, or the constituent stakeholders need, the industries' need. More so, probably, than in the past.

Mr. Hinchey. Could I follow up, Mr. Chairman, one more?

Mr. Bonilla. Go ahead.

Mr. Hinchey. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I appreciate that, and I think that is very valuable and very good. And I think I understand what you are conveying to us. But my question is, how does this get into practice? What is the mechanism that you use? Do the other leaders in the Agriculture Department coordinate with your efforts? You are saying that all you need to do to cut down on this--not eliminate it, but cut down on it substantially, is have a cleaner environment, have greater sanitation, have cooler temperatures prevail. In a way, farming has turned into manufacturing, essentially, in many areas. And we can only anticipate that these kinds of problems that caused illness for 2 million people a year are going to go up unless the research that you are doing has some effect, some efficacy. So that is what I am interested in.

Dr. Jen. Well, I am going to let Dr. Hefferan elaborate on it later, but I think generally speaking, of course, we do have a very good extension system that is trying to get to the general public. I think in this particular case, it is much more important that we work with industry to use the research that we have and disseminate it through a Web page, through published materials, et cetera. I do not know if you can add to that?

FOOD SAFETY

Dr. Hefferan. I will just add briefly to that. In addition to the work that North Carolina A&T reports here under the Evans-Allen program, we have an integrated research education extension program in food safety, which does specifically take research findings to the educational system, including things such as training for small and very small processors. We work, as Dr. Jen suggests, with FSIS, but we work particularly out in the States and in the field with the actual processors, helping them to establish practices that will minimize these activities, or these kinds of pathogens.

I think there is an enormous amount of effort that can be extended in this--working with retailers. We have a large program, for example, in Florida that works with restaurant owners in management of food practices there. But there are many opportunities, and it is facilitated by the integrated research and extension program. It is not to say there is not a long way to go, but we certainly are aware of the issue.

Mr. Hinchey. Thank you, then. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you, Mr. Hinchey. Mr. Latham.

Mr. Latham. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And welcome, everyone here.

NATIONAL ANIMAL DISEASE CENTER

A significant concern for me in Ames, Iowa, is themodernization project with the National Animal Disease Center. There is no request for funding for that this year. If you could just maybe express your opinion or your thoughts on this absence of a request, what it will do to the project as far as extending it, I would appreciate it.

Dr. Jen. Yes, Congressman, I believe you asked the Secretary that question, and she has provided you a general answer. So I am going to ask Dr. Knipling to go into more detail.

Dr. Knipling. Well, let me say, first of all, the agency and the department are very committed to the continuation of this project. I think you are familiar with some of the background, that this was a six-year modernization program that was in all of its out years scheduled to cost a total of $430 million with incremental appropriations. We have to date received appropriations of $157 million, so we are well under way. In fact, in some respects we are ahead of schedule in terms of the funding stream.

Obviously, the lack of a request in 2004 does break that stream. And this at a minimum, of course, would lead to about a one-year delay, the cost impact of which would be probably on the order of about 10 percent, just from the inflationary cost of a one-year delay.

Mr. Latham. So about $43 million additional?

Dr. Knipling. Just ballpark, yes. That is what we would guess. But we are moving right ahead with the design, the award of contracts and so forth. Beyond the design activity, the first major phase construction would be the $75-million biological safety level-3 large animal facility. And we have all of the necessary resources in hand to move forward with that part of the overall projects.

Mr. Latham. What would it take to keep it on track if we did not fund the full amount needed? The original proposal would have the balance of the funding needed--in the 2004 budget. I have heard it would take about $110, or $120 million, to keep it on track, would not delay it as far as the completion in 2006.

Dr. Knipling. Well, any lesser amount would require some modification of the phasing or the sequence of activities. In addition to the large animal facility for which we have resources, we have some additional amounts already in hand. And we are looking now at options as to what amounts added to that, perhaps in 2004, would allow us to get one or more different phases under different scenarios. So we are in the process of determining those options right now.

Mr. Latham. How much has been allocated to date?

Dr. Knipling. In terms of contract awards to the various design activities, about $12 million.

Mr. Latham. Out of 157?

Dr. Knipling. Yes, but that is for some of the initial design awards. And that is in accordance with the original schedule.

Mr. Latham. What was your request to OMB?

Dr. Knipling. The department requested the full amount that was needed. At that time, it was $306 million, but that was before we had the 2003 appropriation. With the 2003 appropriation of $33 million, the balance needed now at this point is $273 million.

Mr. Latham. And that was your request to OMB?

Dr. Knipling. Well, originally it was $306 million, but before we knew the 2003 appropriation level.

Mr. Latham. All right. But you do not have a number if we were to get half of that or some number at this point, in the 2004 bill, that would keep us on schedule?

Dr. Knipling. No, I do not have a number now, but we are actively working with our facility engineers and our design people to look at some options, and we could present those to the committee at some later date.

Mr. Latham. Okay. This initiative is very important for the area, but more importantly from a national perspective, I think it is so important to have that facility operating. Also, I think there is, about $14 million of APHIS money, that went for a security facility over there right now in addition to this.

Dr. Knipling. Yes. That is in addition to the original plan, and that is proceeding well.

Mr. Latham. Okay. I thank you for now. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you, Mr. Latham. Mr. Nethercutt.

Mr. Nethercutt. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ladies and gentlemen, welcome. Glad you are here. Thank you for your work.

FUNDING OF AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH

I am one who feels as though sometimes the agriculture appropriations budget gets criticized for targeted research, but I happen to think that we are not all the same nationally, that we have different needs in Washington State than they do in Iowa or Florida or California or New York. Or Texas. So I happen to think there is a defensible argument that can be made that says we need specific research money for specific problems, and it is okay to earmark those dollars. And I come from a district that has a land-grant university and we are very proud of the research work that is being done there. So I want to ask you if you would agree with that concept, that there is certainly a region-by-region need--or needs that are not the same nationally; that therefore competitive grants are fine, but on the other hand, sometimes in competitive grant systems you do not get the coverage that you need to meet the needs of agriculture producers in a particular region. Does that comport with your view?

Dr. Jen. First of all concept-wise I will agree with you. We get questions about why USDA's research does not operate just like NIH--at one place and does everything. And I say it is not like cancer; you only need to do it in one place, because no matter whether it is in Washington or New York, cancer is cancer. There is no difference. But the soil and temperature and other growing conditions in the different States are so different; the same problem calls for very different solutions. So that is the regional nature, and that is the reason why we have almost a hundred laboratories of ARS throughout the whole country. So concept-wise, I would agree with you.

However, I do want to defend the competitive grant, in the sense that regional projects can compete for a competitive grant just as well. Because the reason I stated it is like in my opening statement. It is my personal belief that competitive grant programs have the advantage of attracting the best brilliant minds to work on food and agriculture systems. And you do not know where they come from in the scientific field sometimes. Soit is the best mechanism of probably trying to utilize the funding for that.

Mr. Nethercutt. I will agree with your concept on that, too, but my point, too, is that sometimes problems come up in agriculture that need an immediate research solution. And we cannot predict exactly what pests or disease or yield reduction problems might occur across the country, and sometimes you need to respond to that in a quick manner, and do it in a directed fashion rather than in a more indirect fashion.

CYBER-SECURITY

But I appreciate your comments. I would also ask you about--I noticed in your budget request your testimony about information technology, cyber-security. Cyber-security is a potentially huge problem in the private sector as well as the government sector. And we do not know what the terrorism threat might be as it relates to hacking into computers and obtaining information or disrupting systems. But my sense is the Department of Agriculture as well as other agencies of Government are not as prepared as they might be. Nor is Congress. Nor is, you know, the business down the street. It is a growing problem and I think it is a potential threat that exists as a further disruption to our country.

Is $3 million adequate for you to deal with what you perceive to be the threat, or is it something that you wish you could do more with?

Dr. Jen. I am sure you are very aware of one of the President's initiatives, e-government.

Mr. Nethercutt. Yes.

Dr. Jen. The REE agencies, actually, are pretty much leading the USDA in terms of trying to implement the e-government initiative. This $3 million that you are talking about is only for NASS, one of the REE agencies, to support NASS' electronic data reporting initiative, and lead the Department in two eGov initiatives. Cyber-security issues will be addressed as part of these initiatives.

Mr. Nethercutt. Well, it is a continuing problem. I think we need to pay attention to it in the Government.

Dr. Jen. Yes, I agree with you.

Mr. Nethercutt. I am grateful for your service and for your testimony. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you, Mr. Nethercutt. Mr. Farr.

Mr. Farr. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I apologize for being late.

I essentially have three questions--one to deal with research in specialty crops, one to do with methylbromide, one with to do with organics, and with the time that is allowed, I will do it, and then if we have another round I will continue on them; if not, I will submit them for the record.

SPECIALTY CROPS

But let me at the outset just state that what concerns me, sitting on this committee now over the number of years, is the--I see significant increases year in and year out for subsidy payments and for price supports. And yet I see the funding for research being flat. And it seems to me that that ought to be a real concern. It ought to be up there among our national security concerns. We learned once that the military could only survive as long as they have access to food. And if indeed we are going to put a lot more money in the military, we need to make sure that they have access to that food and that that food is, almost in all cases, U.S.-grown food.

We have seen with specialty crops that they are value-added products on great demand in foreign markets, they are solid performers, they bring in higher returns in investment than many of the traditional crops. And yet the research to keep everything on the cutting edge is flat-lined. So what is the USDA doing to increase the Federal investment in agricultural research and especially with regard to specialty crops, value-added products and the availability of new technologies of safe production and handling practices and access to new markets? Have you got any new initiatives in that area?

COLLABORATION

Dr. Jen. Well, one of the ways, I think, that we are doing it is through collaboration with other Federal agencies that have technologies that we may or may not have, or we could find ways to borrow in some sense.

Mr. Farr. An example of that?

Dr. Jen. An example of it, that also addresses a little bit of, I think, Congressman Hinchey's question about extension happened last week in Denver. We had a USDA-NASA workshop, at which we were trying to ask NASA to help us use their space technology. They have a lot of space data and we have a lot of ground data. Trying to put those two databases together is brand-new. Geospatial technology, we call it, in some sense. We also announced the fact that NASA and USDA will offer a joint call for proposals to train the State extension specialists on geospatial technology for utilization in agriculture. NASA will pay half of it, and we will pay half of it.

Mr. Farr. May I suggest another area you might want to team up? The United States Navy has a weather center in Georgia and one in Monterey, California, where they collect all the weather data in the world and then they analyze it and put it out. They are now working with the farmers in Salinas Valley to give them dew point data.

Dr. Jen. Great suggestion. We will look into it.

Mr. Farr. And I think that could be helpful to farmers all over the country.

Dr. Jen. Yes.

ORGANIC FOOD RESEARCH

Mr. Farr. But what I am worried about is that we are just sort of--now we do not have enough money to do research, so we are robbing Peter to pay Paul. We just align with partners. That is great, I encourage that. But is there any effort to get some additional funding in this category?

Dr. Jen. Well, sir, you can do a lot of it for us.

Mr. Farr. Will you help us?

Dr. Jen. Could I maybe address the specialty crop and organic foods area that you talked about. We do have work that you might like to hear about. We recognized the fact that we needed to gain more or devote some resources to specialty crop research in organic foods. One ARS station that we have that is quite heavily into it is the Salinas station, with which I am sure you are very familiar.

Mr. Farr. You do not think there is any correlation between that and my being on this committee?

Dr. Jen. No. Absolutely not.

But we recently commissioned an agricultural engineering firm to carry out a feasibility study on expanding that Salinas lab. The report is almost ready and will soon be submitted to the Congress.

Mr. Farr. Well, thank you.

Dr. Jen. Because that is part of the thing that we are addressing. We do recognize that organic food is growing at about 20 percent a year.

Mr. Farr. The markets grow.

Dr. Jen. We have people in the organics field on our National Agricultural Research, Education, Extension and Economics Board, the advisory board. So we are not ignoring organic agriculture. I think one of the difficulties we sometimes have when we change research programs is that we cannot react as fast as we might like because if you hire somebody who has a specialty in one area, later you cannot just fire them or say, you, an animal specialist, go do plants. You cannot do that. So changing research directions sometimes takes a little longer time than some of the other actions that you are doing. But I think we are very keenly aware of what the market is and what the constituents say. We hold listening sessions. I think in the National Research Initiative program that we have an organic transition grant starting, for example.

So we are addressing that. I do not think we are ignoring it.

Mr. Farr. Thank you.

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you, Mr. Farr. Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Boyd. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and Secretary Jen and to your staff, welcome. I know the members of this committee heard me say this before, but I want to make sure that you hear it. I spent my entire life in production agriculture, and I know that I would not still be in it if it was not for the work of the ARS, CSREES, the other agencies that you have under your purview enabling us to stay competitive in the production and marketing of our crops.

PRODUCTION AGRICULTURE RESEARCH

It reminds me of a saying that--and I want to paraphrase here. I am not a Washington historian, but George Washington once said, and I paraphrase, always maintain a strong production agriculture in this Nation and beware of entangling foreign trade agreements.

Actually, we have done pretty well on that--don't you think, Dr. Knipling, on maintaining a strong production agriculture? We may not have done quite so well on the entangling foreign trade agreements, but it is the nature of our world today that it is a smaller world with more open borders.

I want you to know that I have visited every ARS station in Florida. I made a commitment to one of your employees, Dr. Knipling, your director down in Florida a couple of years ago to do that and I have completed that. And quite impressed with their work.

What I am concerned about, though, is--and this question has been touched on earlier. I strongly believe that the only way that we can stay ahead of this curve and maintain our strong production agriculture industry is through research and development. Research is an important component of that. And I am somewhat concerned now, as I have been in previous administrations, that there is a reduction of commitment. There is not the commitment to research and development that we have had in the past. And I think that is becoming more and more important as we open our borders and expand our trade agreements and competition becomes greater and greater. Because in many cases, the people that we are doing trade business with, all they have is agricultural products generated with cheap labor.

And my question is, is there anybody in this administration, or do you all ever have any conversations about the importance of a strong production agricultural industry in this Nation, and the fact that, the main thing, that you have to stay ahead of the curve on the research side? Very simple question.

LEVERAGING FUNDS

Dr. Jen. Sir, that is something I try to say every day within the department as well as elsewhere in the Federal level. And I think other Federal agencies sometimes sympathize with us in it, and sometimes realize that we have limited funding resources. So we try to leverage our limited resources to a fairly great extent.

I gave an example about NASA a while ago. I would like to give you another example, if I could, about how we are trying to leverage our limited funding. Genomic sequencing, as you know, is a very big thing, but we don't have a lot of flexible funding to do large-scale sequencing. So we team up with NIH.

They have a human genomics center, which has an abundance of resources. We talked to them about the possibility of sequencing honeybees. I am sure you understand the point of honeybee to agriculture, sir. At first we were talking somewhere between $7 million to $10 million to complete the sequencing of honey bees. And I just said, we will pay half, can you pay the other half? So NIH said, sorry, we really don't have that kind of funding. It happens that, however, in their prioritizing they looked at the evolution chart. The honeybee is on the evolution chart as a unique species. So eventually NIH agreed to pay 90 percent of it, and we paid 10 percent. The sequencing of the honeybee is going to be done within a month or so. I think within the next few years, with that new knowledge that we have with the honeybee, we will be able to solve a lot of problems that we have with honeybees.

So that is one example where we are trying to use creative means to leverage on funding. I think it also makes good friends in the other Federal agencies who understand and are sympathetic to us for our research. And they do realize that such research is important to them as well.

Mr. Boyd. That is good information for us to have, and I am glad to know that you are trying to leverage what limited resources we have.

Mr. Chairman, I know my time is up. I just want to say that this is one member who--you know, many of the facilities that we have, ARS facilities, are World War II vintage or older. I mean, I visited some that I would not want to work in. I don't know what it is going to take. Maybe it is time that we considered a reorganization in terms of mergers of some of our facilities. I don't know what the answer is, but count this one member of the committee who firmly believes that we have got to continue to stay ahead of the curve on the research side. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Bonilla. Thank you, Mr. Boyd. I am at this time going to ask my vice chairman, Mr. Latham, to take the chair and ask a couple of remaining questions he has.

Dr. Jen, just for your information, I do not anticipate that we will be here beyond maybe another 10 or 15 minutes. Mr. Hinchey and Mr. Farr both have very brief follow-up questions, and then I believe we will be wrapped up.

So with that, I will ask Mr. Latham to take the chair and proceed with his questions.

Thank you, Dr. Jen, and thank you all for being here.

Dr. Jen. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Bonilla. We want to remind all staff that is present of members who did not make it today to please pick up the budget bag that was left here by the good folks that are testifying today. It has a lot of neat stuff in it.

Mr. Latham. Okay, now we can have fun. [Laughter.]

He heard that. 'Bye, Henry.

I want to associate myself with what Mr. Boyd said, and I think Mr. Nethercutt is saying the same thing, too, that the future of agriculture lies in research, in basic research. Whether you talk about plant, animal disease, renewable energies, pharmaceuticals from plants, our future in agriculture is going to come from what you folks do. And that is a heck of a responsibility.

I personally would like to research enhancement similar to that at NIH maybe over the next 5 years. I would like to see some type of an effort in that same regard as far as agricultural research that would put that type of emphasis on it, because it does have a tremendous impact, not just economically for farmers, but for food safety and our own security here. I don't know if you want to comment on that or what you see as far as potential, but we have to find a way to dramatically increase the funding, I think.

And you are going to say no, you don't want it, right?

Dr. Jen. Mr. Chairman, any way you want to give me money.

Mr. Latham. Okay. I go back to my Ames facility, which is World War II vintage type facilities, that are not as functional, as they are in the security issues that we are dealing with today.

One thing that I think in the 2003 bill that was just passed, there is a national research initiative on genetically modified agricultural grants, including studying the risks and benefits to humans with the new technology that is coming forward. Can you tell me where that research is going and what do you expect to find out?

GENOMICS AND RISK ASSESSMENT

Dr. Jen. Well, I think risk assessment is badly needed research because there is a perception with the consumers that GMO products are not good, when there is not a single study that showed they harm humans at all. So I think studying risk assessment in genomics research is badly needed. And with the increase of NRI funding we are doing a number of things. For example, I think Deputy Under Secretary Brown is going to head a group doing risk assessment of food safety research. ARS is actually talking with Chinese scientists about doing, this kind of risk assessment with international cooperation. We not only need to convince the developing world that we are guarding against risk associated with GMOs, we need to get the other people on board to buy our product.

So these projects are being initiated.

Mr. Latham. A major new initiative that we are getting a lot of emphasis on in Iowa, is biologics and pharmaceuticals in plants. I don't want to see the same thing happen with that work that has happened with GMOs. As a farmer myself, like Mr. Boyd, I sat through scores if not hundreds of meetings talking about genetically modified and what the future was going to be. Not one conversation ever talked about the consumer out there. It was all about production and benefits, all that. I don't want to see this get away from us and not be responsive to the consumer on this stuff.

Dr. Jen. Could I ask, Dr. Susan Offutt, to, discuss a project related to that in the budget?

Mr. Latham. Yes, please.

Dr. Offutt. Yes. The question concerns how consumers react to information when they meet a new product. And the research that we have done so far tells us, particularly in the case of biotechnology products, that scientific credibility is really important in determining not only whether they will buy, but how much they are willing to pay.

So building on that foundation, the 2004 budget proposes to look more closely at, for example, genetically modified wheat to understand and anticipate what consumer reaction will be. As you suggest, we introduce products to the marketplace but, lo and behold, we find out people don't want them.

So the question is, can we anticipate their reaction and then create ways to deliver information that enables them to make up their minds in an objective manner.

Dr. Jen. It is in the 2004 budget request, sir.

Mr. Latham. Wonderful. Okay. Mr. Hinchey.

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Hinchey. Dr. Jen, I want to stay on the issue of research, too, and focus maybe a little bit more narrowly this time on the issue of food safety.

The entire budget for food safety research at ARS was $93 million in 2002, and that included research on every aspect of food, all across the board. And it appears that ARS's share of the Federal research dollars last year was only 2 percent. Defense had 49 percent, HHS 23 percent, on down the list. This seems very low to me, given the problems that farmers face all across the board--food safety, nutrition, invasive pests, every thing that we have been talking about in these hearings over the last several weeks.

Would you comment on that?

Dr. Jen. Yes. First of all, I think through the generosity of this committee, food safety research in USDA has really increased quite dramatically in the last four or five years. This includes food safety grants that CSREES administers, which is approximately, 40 to 50 million a year?

Dr. Hefferan. About $44.5 million, all told.

Dr. Jen. And I am going to give this away, if it is okay. TheERS is actually going to unveil next month a food-borne illness cost calculator.

Mr. Hinchey. Say that again?

Dr. Jen. Food-borne illness cost calculator. I would like Dr. Offutt to tell you more about it.

Dr. Offutt. In making decisions about what food safety priorities are and where to direct the research dollars, what problems are most pressing, cost-benefit analysis is often used. The question is, how much are we losing in terms of people's illness, their inability to go to work, the medical costs attributable each year to illness doe to different pathogens? But if you look across the Federal Government, people make different assumptions about how this cost should be calculated. Those numbers are quite sensitive to assumptions about, for example, the value of human life, wages, and the like. There is no one right way to do it, but how it comes out really matters.

So what we have developed is an online interactive way for people to put in their own assumptions about the losses to food safety, to come up with estimates of impact. We think this will go a long way, number one, to smooth some of the discussion that occurs among agencies if there is a disagreement about what the most virulent or most costly pathogen is, as well as for people in the public to understand how the costs of food-borne illness actually affect their own lives and those in their businesses.

Dr. Jen. The reason I wanted her to tell you about this is that I think we are really trying to implement a more integrated approach to the research problem, not only looking for scientific laboratory results, but also economic results and the risk factors and various different things added together. We feel that will help us determine the priority of the research that needs to be done to address this and report to you and be most effective in utilizing the taxpayers' money.

Mr. Hinchey. Maybe if you could, give us a cross-section, a cross-cut of all the food safety research that you are doing--where you are doing it, how much you are spending in those particular areas--so we would have a clearer idea exactly where these resources are going.

Dr. Jen. Steve, do we have those? I believe food safety is one of the cross-cuts, right?

Mr. Dewhurst. We do a cross-cut that we would be glad to provide to the committee.

Dr. Jen. That would be for more than just my agencies.

Mr. Dewhurst. We do a department-wide cross-cut on food safety which we are glad to make available to the committee. It may not go quite to the level of detail that Congressman is asking, but we can supplement that information with the detail that he wants.

Mr. Hinchey. Great. If we have any additional questions, then we can just pose them to you. Thank you very much.

[The information follows:]

[GRAPHIC(S)] NOT AVAILABLE IN TIFF FORMAT]

I know that there was some clinical research on E. coli and Listeria in the budget of 2002. But if I am not mistaken, you are not asking for any additional funds for research on the issue of meat and poultry or other contamination in the budget request this year. Is that correct?

Dr. Jen. Is that correct?

Dr. Knipling. That is correct. There is no new request, but we do have a very large base program collectively among the agencies. I would say it approaches about $150 million. For Listeria alone we have in ARS about a $12 million program, including those increases in 2002, and actually just a few weeks ago for 2003 there were some additional monies provided as well.

Mr. Hinchey. Well, thank you, ladies and gentlemen. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Mr. Latham. Thank you. Mr. Farr.

Mr. Farr. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

METHYL BROMIDE

I am very interested in the methyl bromide issue. As you know, we have signed protocols on the elimination of methyl bromide. We have not found an acceptable alternative yet, yet we have spent hundreds of millions of dollars looking for it. Last year I mentioned that there might be some evidence that methyl bromide is not, if used properly, is not the ozonedepleting originally thought. The idea was that if you could, in injection in soils, if you used the best technologies you could eliminate the escape into the atmosphere and therefore it would not be a depleter. We have already sort of accepted that in the methyl bromide chamber treatment, that it does not get into the atmosphere, therefore it is not a depleter.

I just wondered what is being done to address that issue. It was raised last year. And sort of the follow-on to that is are you using any of your--can USDA provide any direct support for the commodity boards or the universities who might have this kind of research? And if so, is there any effort to revisit this issue? I mean, I think if it is an ozone-depleter, we cannot do anything about it--obviously, there is no worth to doing it. But if we have learned from technology that if we apply it correctly, we don't have that problem, then we ought not to then be held down on eliminating it when we have an ability to control it.

Dr. Jen. Could I ask two of my managers to answer your question? I think as far as the grant goes, we do have grants in methyl bromide. Right?

Dr. Hefferan. Yes, we have a methyl bromide transition program, which is primarily university-based, and they arelooking at a number of alternatives. Basically they found there is not a silver bullet. It does not address the issue that you have.

Mr. Farr. No, it does not address that issue I asked. It is not looking for--I know you are doing the alternatives, but the question is can you support commodity boards or universities who might have the research showing that it is not--if you use it properly, it is not a depleter?

Dr. Hefferan. We do support university work that constantly looks at the real consequences.

Mr. Farr. So you can support those kinds of studies?

Dr. Hefferan. That can be supported both through the formula programs and other competitive programs.

Mr. Farr. Okay. Then how about what is the agency doing about looking into whether it is in fact a depleter or not?

Dr. Jen. Right. Ed?

Dr. Knipling. ARS is not addressing this issue directly. There have been in the past year or so a number of technical symposia and meetings within the scientist community on this subject. However, we in USDA don't have the means to challenge whether or not methyl bromide is an ozone depleter. As you alluded to earlier, we are doing some research on the recapture of methyl bromide, particularly from the post-harvest commodity treatment in chambers.

Mr. Farr. But don't you think that is sort of the debate that we ought to engage in? If indeed we have technology that allows us best management practices that does not allow it to be a depleter, then why would we go back and revisit the issue?

Dr. Knipling. Well, yes, in that sense. In fact, that sort of data and technology was used to help develop the policies that methyl bromide can in fact be used and exempted from the regulations for quarantine purposes. In terms of the atmospheric physics and chemistry of ozone depletion, we just don't have a voice in that particular issue.

I would like to go on quickly to just point out that one very important activity that is taking place right now--as related to a provision in the Montreal Protocol--is an allowance to have so-called critical use exemptions. In these cases the ban on methyl bromide use in the year 2005 would be suspended or exempted for those commodities where available alternative technologies can be shown not to be technically or economically feasible. Scientific staff of several of the agencies here at the table working with EPA in the last few months and with the commodity organizations have just submitted a package of behalf of the U.S. to propose critical use exemptions for a number of commodities.

Mr. Farr. Is there a copy of that list?

Dr. Knipling. Yes. It will be reviewed by an international panel. And there are some 16 California commodities that are proposed for such critical use exemptions.

Mr. Farr. Do you know if nurseries are on that list?

Dr. Knipling. I suspect they are. I don't know that for sure. Certainly strawberries is at the top of the list, but there are a number of categories of commodities. I would expect the nursery crops to be on that list, yes. I will double-check.

Mr. Farr. Thank you.

Mr. Latham. Okay, thank you, Mr. Farr. Mr. Boyd. Do you have any further questions?

Mr. Farr. I will put them in the record.

Mr. Latham. Okay. I would hope we could finish up because we have a series of votes. Thank you. Mr. Boyd.

Mr. Boyd. Mr. Chairman, I want to follow up on the line of questioning I started a while ago.

USDA RESEARCH FACILITIES

Is it time, Secretary Jen, for us to take a serious look at realignment of our ARS facilities across the Nation? It seems to me that many people believe we built them based on who happened to chair a certain committee or so on. And I must admit that I had the same feeling as I drove through Florida and visited all seven stations. Is it time for us to take a look at that? You know, we had to change the law to do that for the military.

Dr. Jen. I think, Congressman, the last such review was done in 1999. There were ARS facilities that were recommended for consolidation or closure, but none of the recommendations has been implemented. I think we are actually doing a research facility study of the whole USDA, not only just ARS, but also FSIS, you know, forestry research and all those, to see whether or not we are able to consolidate some or better utilize them. We thought it would probably be more appropriate for us to do it department-wide.

Mr. Boyd. The study in 1999, was that an in-house study?

Dr. Jen. It was mandated by the Congress. The members of the study committee were outside USDA.

Mr. Boyd. But it was the 1999?

Dr. Jen. Right. And we will be happy to provide you with a copy.

Mr. Boyd. Was any action taken on that, or what is the----

Dr. Jen. Ed can answer that.

STRATEGIC PLANNING TASK FORCE

Dr. Knipling. That study was requested in the 1996 Farm Bill and the Department did appoint an external task force to study that issue. The written report was issued in 1999. That report has been used on several occasions since that time to help us in our strategic planning for new facilities, and in fact for the fiscal year 2003 budget that was proposed to this committee a year ago, it did recommend some facility consolidations and closures in accordance with the recommendations of that report.

Mr. Boyd. Dr. Jen, let me ask you very specifically, sir, do you think it is time that we revisit that report and consider enacting, implementing some of the suggestions, recommendations of that report?

Dr. Jen. I really don't know how to answer that question.

Mr. Boyd. Dr. Brown, welcome to the committee, sir. Would you take a shot at answering the question?

Dr. Brown. As far as the necessity of doing a new report, it has been completed now for a few years. Much of what was recommended is still valid. So I think we probably don't need a whole new report right now. We will continue to use that report as we recommend consolidations and closures and so on.

Mr. Boyd. Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, I just want the committee to know I think this issue is so seriousin terms of how effective we are in ARS, that it is maybe something that we should revisit, have discussions with authorizers, whatever we need to do. But my sense is that, and from having talked to other folks from around the country and visiting my stations, that probably we can be more effective. We are doing a lot of great work. I am just not sure we are doing it as efficiently as we could be.

[The information provided was deemed too lengthy for printing and is retained in committee files.]

Mr. Latham. Thank you very much. Thank you all very much on the panel for your responses today. There will be questions from members for the record. If you could respond as quickly as possible, that would be helpful. And again, we thank you for your testimony.

The committee will be adjourned until 9:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 19, for the World Development Department.

We are adjourned.

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